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## THE CHAUTAUQUA MOVEMENT

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The special summer assembly organized by Bishop John H. Vincent, to which he gave the name "Chautauqua," has not only grown to nearly a thousand summer gatherings bearing that name, but the features of these meetings have become varied and inclusive. Bible study and recreation, which characterized the early years at Chautauqua, New York, are the features dominating a dozen or so of the present-day assemblies, Chautauqua Institution (the official name of the present Chautauqua), Winona Lake, Indiana; Mt. Gretna, Pennsylvania; Old Salem and Quiver Lake, Illinois; Ottawa and Winfield, Kansas, and some others. At a larger number, recreation is featured, Bible study is given more or less emphasis, while music, literature, travel, economics and various other subjects are presented in classes, or the emphasis is given to popular lectures and concerts. These are resort Chautauquas, where people spend a few days or weeks in study and recreation. Chautauqua Institution easily leads all others. There the summer population reaches more than twenty thousand; the session lasts from late June until early September; and the program of lectures, concerts, recreation and study includes everything that earnest people may want. Other summer assemblies, like Winona Lake, Indiana; Bay View, Michigan; Monteagle, Tennessee, have an attendance of many thousands and are doing a great and important work in popular adult education.

The resort Chautauquas are perhaps only one in twenty of the total number of assemblies that have appropriated the name. While the attendance at resort Chautauquas is largely from smaller towns, yet these do not influence rural communities as do the local Chautauquas. For the most part local Chautauquas are held for a short period, seldom less than six days, and never more than three weeks, the average being probably ten days. They are held in towns of from 500 to 20,000 inhabitants, but in few cases would the Chautauquas be possible without the support of the farmers, who are counted

on to drive in in such numbers as to make the Chautauqua a financial success.

A large tent generally serves as an audience room, though in an increasing number may be found a steel structure with open sides called a Chautauqua auditorium. Few of the local Chautauquas have campers, the audience being recruited from the farmers who drive in, the housewives who cut short their daily routine, and the business men who leave, and in many towns close their places of business for some hours each day to attend the sessions. In only a small percentage of these assemblies is there any attempt at class instruction. Where such is given, it generally includes domestic science, arts and crafts, needle work, Bible study, or the Round Table, identified with the work of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.

The platform program of lectures, music and entertainment is the one feature of the Chautauqua idea which has been included in several hundred summer assemblies that are called Chautauquas. Some amusement parks have adopted the name, some committees use the name for a variety program which is more like cheap vaudeville, but even in these ignorant and misdirected efforts, Chautauqua stands for an attempt for community betterment. The results in most cases are immediate and far reaching. To understand this, we have only to note the conditions. People generally sit in audiences where their coming together gives them a label. They are Methodist or Baptist or Democrats or Republicans and they listen only to speakers who believe as they do. At the Chautauqua, however, they sit together as a community and listen to Methodists, Baptists, Catholics, Democrats, Republicans—men of any creed or party, who come because of their message, who come not because of their identification with a sect or party, but because they have something which the community as a whole wishes to hear. On the same program may be heard an admonition that the country should prepare for war, and an equally emphatic denunciation of the waste in preparing for war. One speaker may advocate a plan for economic betterment which a few days later another speaker will stoutly oppose. Sectarian and partisan presentations are not permitted, but religious, political and sociological discussion is welcomed. The effect on the community is that the listeners challenge what every speaker says and challenge their own ready-made or

inherited beliefs. Progressive ideas in religion, education, politics and business inevitably follow.

By its organization the Chautauqua is calculated to make the deepest impression on the community. It is widely and persistently advertised: a large number of season tickets are sold in advance; the price of admission to the holder of a season ticket is seldom more, generally less, than ten cents for each event on the program. There is a musical prelude before every lecture, so that the audience is made more impressionable. Sessions are held afternoon and evening, by which continual coming and going the crowd spirit is aroused, and those who early in the week were indifferent yield to the desire to do what their neighbors are doing. In these and other ways is the audience rendered suggestible. The lecturers who address these audiences speak with authority, either such authority as continued advertising may give them, or the authority which attaches to being much in the public prints. Given a suggestible audience and a lecturer who speaks with authority, the result upon the community is immediate, notable and more or less lasting.

How much the rural communities support the Chautauquas may be understood from a few figures. In Nebraska, with sixty-one towns having a population of a thousand or more, there are fifty-five Chautauquas. Iowa, an agricultural state, has nearly two hundred Chautauquas. Thus far in their development the local Chautauquas have been established almost entirely in agricultural communities. Illinois has nearly two hundred, Kansas has about fifty, Missouri as many more, Oklahoma a dozen, and the rural communities of Indiana and Ohio are organizing a number each year. During the coming summer nearly a hundred Chautauquas will be held in towns with an average population of five hundred.

When the camp-meeting began to lose its hold with the people, Bishop Vincent greatly extended the scope of instruction offered, added entertainment and recreation to the plan and inaugurated the Chautauqua idea. Like the idea which it supplanted, the Chautauqua is supported largely by the rural community.

The immediate effect of the Chautauqua upon rural life must be positive. Not only in the local Chautauqua, a movement in the smaller towns where the farmers' families are depended on for support, but at many of the Chautauquas, farmers pay the largest percentage of the gate receipts. At one Illinois town with a population

of 463 where the price of a season ticket was a dollar, the receipts were nearly \$800.00. In another with a population of 370 the receipts were \$632.00. At Rockport, Missouri, and Clarinda, Iowa, for example, it is not uncommon to see from 500 to 1,000 buggies, carriages and automobiles at the Chautauqua grounds. Lincoln Park Chautauqua is several miles from the little town of Cawker City, Kansas, with no means of transportation except private conveyances. The constituency is almost entirely from the farms within twenty miles. Yet few audiences there number less than a thousand people, and at times there have been as many as ten thousand people on the grounds. Camargo, Illinois, with similar conditions, has had even larger crowds on the grounds. Possibly the most notable Chautauqua of this type is Old Salem, on the farm where was located the grocery store in which Lincoln clerked. The president of the board of directors and the most active man in the management is a farmer. The grounds and improvements on the banks of the Sangamon River represent an investment of fifty thousand dollars. Here are a few cottages, but most of the people tent during the three weeks' session. They drive in from their farms with wagon loads of camp furniture and provisions, send the teams home by the farm hands, and stay to enjoy the varied program. The tenting population has not for years been below a thousand, while it oftener reaches twenty-five hundred people. Besides those who tent, hundreds drive in every day, and on special days the crowd is increased to ten or fifteen thousand people.

Farmers are the largest and most attentive portion of the audience when men of the type of William Jennings Bryan, Robert M. La Follette and Richmond Pearson Hobson speak. But the special features on the Chautauqua program which deal definitely with farm life are increasing in number and popularity. Farmers eagerly listen to Professor Holden talk on corn and soil, or D. Ward King explain the split-log drag method of road making.

Whether from the country or from the town, the audience soon becomes impatient with anything technical or academic, or with an inexperienced speaker, and quickly avails itself of the open-sided tents or auditoriums to make their escape. But, with a skilled speaker, they will sit for an hour or two, apparently unmindful of the intense heat or the uncomfortable benches.

At scores of Chautauquas in Iowa, Missouri, Illinois and Kan-

sas there has been introduced in recent years special instruction in stock judging, soil and seed testing. This is generally given at a morning hour, for smaller groups, when object lessons are offered by professors from the state agricultural colleges. In a few places, notably Clarinda, Iowa, boys' corn clubs have been formed, and similar clubs for girls. These young people have separate camps on the grounds, where they have their own co-operative organizations for helping with the cooking, waiting on tables and where they carry out a specially arranged program of sports, and work in stock judging, seed testing, or household economics. At Clarinda, last summer, more than two hundred boys and girls from the country were enrolled in these clubs.

The popularity of the county fair less than a generation ago is now enjoyed by the local Chautauqua in these middle western states. One has but to attend a fair and a Chautauqua to be impressed with the difference of outlook offered by each. To illustrate: A certain Iowa town is said to conduct the best fair in the state, with the exception of that held at the state capital. Twenty-five cents admitted the visitor to the grounds, where he might see a half dozen exhibits of improved farm machinery, demonstrated by the manufacturers, and less than a hundred entries for prizes in needle work, baking and preserving. Farther on were a score of tents with freaks and fakes, to each of which an admission fee of only five or ten cents was charged, so the score of noisy barkers shrieked. There were a dozen soft drink, confection and lunch concessions, each with a leathern-lunged barker. For an additional fee of twenty-five cents, the visitor was admitted to the grandstand to see the races. Here a dozen venders made their way among the seats, lustily shouting their wares. At every step the visitor was importuned to spend money. On the street at night, was a free open-air, hair-raising exhibition, and innumerable noisy venders. So far as the visitor could see, the fair had brought to town race-track followers, freak exhibitors, and many persons with ingenious schemes of varying degrees of honesty or dishonesty for separating people from their money.

Three weeks, later, on the same grounds, was held a Chautauqua which offered an eight days' program, including more than thirty events, for two dollars and a half. On the program was excellent vocal and orchestral music, two of the leading political

speakers of the country, a famous preacher, a half dozen clean entertainments, and much more that a discerning committee of men who were interested in the uplift of the community could provide. The attitude of the management was to give all it could to the community. There were no extra fees, no attempt to get money from the visitor after he entered the grounds, there was no noise, no questionable characters in evidence. The Chautauqua was simply the organized best element of the community expressing itself.